

VZCZCXRO4429
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #3957/01 3391839
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
O 051839Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4676
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHBC/REO BASRAH PRIORITY 2291
RUEHKUK/REO KIRKUK PRIORITY 2231
RUEHIHL/REO HILLAH PRIORITY 2234
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 003957

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/26/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MCNS MEETING FOR DECEMBER 2 DISCUSSES ROLE OF
CONCERNED LOCAL CITIZEN (CLC) GROUPS

REF: BAGHDAD 03874

BAGHDAD 00003957 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: CDA Patricia Butenis for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C/REL UK AS) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki chaired December 2 a two-hour session of the Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) devoted entirely to a review of the CLCs and their evolution within Iraq. After briefings by Baghdad Operations Commander (BOC) LTG Aboud, Iraqi Ground Forces Commander (IGFC) General Ali Ghaydan, and others, Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander LTG Odierno presented a comprehensive review of the CLC program and how it has been managed by the Multi-National Forces (MNF). While Maliki still expressed some concern about ethno-sectarian segregation that could result from CLC activity and the need to investigate allegations of abuse in Diyala province, he responded to LTG Odierno's presentation positively, stating that now was the time to take steps to transition the CLCs into ISF and otherwise integrate them under GOI authority, giving instructions that the Crisis Action committee should implement the plan outlined by Odierno. End Summary.

12. (S/REL UK AS) As determined at the November 25 MCNS meeting, the only item on the agenda for the December 2 meeting was the status and future of CLCs (reftel). The PM opened the meeting with a recognition of the Iraqi and Coalition partnership in this conflict and called for a balanced review of the efforts of the CLCs in conjunction with Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). He noted the importance of utilizing the positive contribution of citizens in the counter-insurgent and counter-extremist fight. Before turning the meeting over to Baghdad Operations Commander General Aboud, Maliki noted that success is always accompanied by failures and he asked all who were about to speak to do so in the spirit of balance and truth.

Baghdad Operations Commander

13. (S/REL UK AS) General Aboud presented his views of the positive and negative features of the CLCs. Generally positive about their role, he cited their counter-intelligence (C/I) and counter-insurgent (COIN) value to the ISF. He noted that the CLCs had materially contributed to a reduction in support for terrorists. The groups' efforts had served to isolate terrorists from the population and the support the local citizens might offer. By drawing young men into the volunteer organizations, he

added, the pool of recruits for terrorists was reduced. Most important, the CLC members provided valuable intelligence about activities in their areas. He added that the CLC in the outskirts of the city were more cohesive and effective than those in the city itself, opining that this was due to their ties to the land and tribal leadership.

¶4. (S/REL UK AS) Aboud listed positive and negative aspects of the CLCs:

- they had increased security, largely through their local knowledge
- they were a unifying element for their local communities
- they provided accurate information to ISF and CF
- they served as a useful alternative for young men possibly attracted otherwise to malevolent organizations
- their voluntary nature was supportive of the GOI
- their presence neutralized bad influences
- enrollment was by free choice - enrolling was a patriotic process

On the downside, Aboud noted:

- some CLCs were being infiltrated by malevolent actors
- they lacked discipline
- they could benefit one sect at the expense of another in mixed areas

¶5. (S/REL UK AS) He recommended the following:

- volunteers should be from the local area
- they must accept the authority of ISF for security
- they must be screened before being enrolled
- a timetable should be developed for follow on hiring of those to transition into ISF
- volunteers should be answerable to a committee of ISF and CF commanders, at least for the first three months
- groups should be mixed if they will be operating in a mixed area
- the media should be used to help recruit volunteers.

BAGHDAD 00003957 002.2 OF 004

¶6. (S/REL UK AS) The PM raised a question concerning the details of the joint leadership of volunteers, questioning the good sense of multiple commanders. Aboud elaborated that this committee would serve to vet and evaluate volunteers to be inducted later into the Army or Police services. The ISF Commander of the area would still maintain operational control over the CLCs.

IFCNR View

¶7. (S/REL UK AS) Deputy NSA Dr. Safa'a Rasul, speaking as the chairman of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation (IFCNR) gave a generally positive evaluation of the CLCs. He noted that MNF-I has regularly briefed the IFCNR on the activities of CLCs, but ISF Commanders should start informing the IFCNR of CLC activities in their Areas of Operations. He noted some concern with the ethnic basis of most CLCs. He made several recommendations. Principal among these were a firm decision to shift CLCs from under MNF-I authority to ISF authority, and to transfer command and control of CLCs to ISF vice MNF-I. Safa'a also noted that an amnesty for many Iraqis currently detained for anti-government or anti-Coalition activities would be helpful.

Ground Forces Commander

¶8. (S/REL UK AS) In very brief remarks, General Ali, the Iraqi Ground Forces Commander (IGFC) stated that he had envisioned three phases for the CLCs: first, as gap fillers for places where ISF forces were insufficient; second, as auxiliary forces to the ISF; finally, to be enlisted into the ISF. He complained that some CLC members were not responding to orders. He also expressed discontent with CLCs adopting group names, alleging this

linked them to particularly political groups. Interrupting, PM Maliki declared that the CLC volunteers cannot adopt group names - they are individual volunteers only. Finally, General Ali noted that local volunteers were not needed everywhere in Iraq.

Diyala is Different?

¶9. (S/REL UK AS) The local ISF commander for Diyala was the most negative in his evaluation of CLCs. He complained that in Diyala province the CLCs were guilty of recruiting young children, forming political parties, abductions, and home invasions. He singled out the 1920 Brigade, claiming they were responsible for kidnappings. He said that in the principal city of Baqubah, fifteen percent of the young men belonged to CLCs, further complaining that the CLCs have been infiltrated by criminal elements. He stated that CLC criminality in Baqubah is preventing IDP returns to that city. He summed up his review by stating that the ISF was unable to control certain parts of the province in the face of some CLCs. The CG intervened to note that there were only 1700 CLC members in all of Diyala province.

Ministry of Interior-Intelligence

¶10. (S/REL UK AS) The Director of Intelligence of the Ministry of Interior gave an overview of the development of CLCs as a response to Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), essentially repeating his comments from the previous MCNS (reftel). Of note, he ascribed the reduction in terrorist activity to ISF and MNF action, leaving aside the usefulness of CLCs in providing actionable intelligence on AQI as others had noted earlier in the meeting. He emphasized the need for the GOI to assert authority over the CLCs, specifically, their placement under ISF command. He also urged efforts to prevent the infiltration of the volunteer groups by criminal or terrorist elements. He cautioned that the Government must know where the loyalties lie of these CLCs and to not allow the building of armed groups not under the direct supervision of the ISF.

MNC-I View

¶11. (S/REL UK AS) LTG Odierno then presented a briefing on the CLCs, including how they were started, their invaluable

BAGHDAD 00003957 003.2 OF 004

contribution to the battle against AQI, and next steps with them.

Violence Down

¶12. (S/REL MNF) LTG Odierno first noted that violence was down significantly over the last few months. This included mortar violence against CF, ISF, and most important Iraqi civilians. Violence of all types - IEDS, sniper fire, mortar and rocket attacks, etc. - was down. Ethno-sectarian based violence had also dropped off, with a resultant increase in economic activity.

Common Goals and Standards

¶13. (S/REL MNF) LTG Odierno emphasized that the CLCs were part of a team with MNF-I and ISF pursuing the same goals:

- Promoting Iraqi Unity
- Protecting the population
- Defeating extremists - AQI as well as others
- Developing ISF
- Providing essential services and jobs to the people
- Denying malign influences
- Realizing Iraq's potential

They are not a hindrance to achieving these goals, but a useful complement to ISF and MNF-I efforts. In fact, due to the trust they enjoy from the local population, the CLCs are an essential component of the campaign against extremists and terrorists.

¶14. (S/REL MNF) LTG Odierno acknowledged some problems, which were being addressed, but did not outweigh the benefits of the CLCs. MNF-I they were, like some of the Iraqi leadership, concerned by attempts at criminal infiltration into and political manipulation of the CLCs, lack of cooperation with ISF by some CLC members, and the need for more training of CLC volunteers. He noted that CLC volunteers are carefully vetted, that their biometric data is collected, and that mixed Shia-Sunni groups are formed to operate in mixed areas. LTG Odierno outlined standards that had been established to include a ban on insignia of rank, party, or sectarian identification. Sanctions had been established for infractions, including probation, removal from the group and contract termination.

¶15. (S/REL MNF) LTG Odierno also underlined the subordination of CLCs to ISF - the CLCs engage only in defensive security measures within their local sector and in joint operations with ISF. The ISF commander in the area must approve their actions. Local committees provide oversight to ensure compliance with standards.

Next Phase

¶16. (S/REL MNF) The CLCs were always envisioned to be a temporary solution, Odierno noted. They will not be used by MNF-I in southern Iraq because there is no need for them there to combat AQI or other terrorist groups. Odierno described a three-stage process. The CLCs had first been contracted to work under Coalition supervision, now they were being transitioned to GOI supervision. In the third and final phase of their evolution, some volunteers will become members of ISF while most, up to 80 percent of the total CLC membership, will transition to employment following education and skills training. The priority now is to maintain the momentum on security and begin the training and education programs so that in summer 2008 about 20 percent can be integrated into the Iraqi Police, Army, and other security services while the rest are prepared for useful employment when their service as security volunteers is no longer needed. Finally, Odierno noted that the CLCs will be capped at a number to be agreed upon with the Government of Iraq. In conclusion, Odierno stated that the CLCs are mostly good people who want to be part of the new Iraq and that the window of opportunity to reach out to them is now.

Maliki's Summation

¶17. (S/REL MNF) PM Maliki observed that there was broad agreement on the CLCs - they are temporary, they will

BAGHDAD 00003957 004.2 OF 004

transition to GOI authority, many will be integrated into ISF. He said the time to implement transition of authority and integration was now - enough words had been spoken. He emphasized that these steps, outlined by General Odierno, must be undertaken soon, expressing fears that ethno-sectarian segregation could be deepened by the CLCs if proper steps were not taken. He also said that a mechanism to deal with the allegations of wrongdoing by CLCs in Diyala province must be created. Maliki concurred with the Minister of Defense's intervention calling for a temporary committee to supervise the volunteers and that a new permanent structure for CLCs was not needed as the CLCs will be integrated into existing security structures. To the Minister of Interior's

complaint that he needed more money to integrate the CLCs into MOI structures, Maliki responded, "we have given you money." Maliki stated that the Crisis Action Committee should review the MCNS discussions and develop a plan of next steps. The CG stated that MNF-I would work closely with Iraqi organizations to operationalize the concepts in LTG Odierno,s briefing.
BUTENIS